

Legislature 2004: 47th District Report



Boeing 7E7 decision a victory for the 47th District, state

In my November 2003 newsletter, I stated **my top legislative priority was to keep Boeing's new jet production here**. I was elated when Boeing announced it would be building its new generation 7E7 airplanes in Everett. Washington's Office of Financial Management estimates the 7E7 project will directly or indirectly create 17,300 new jobs over the next 12 years.

I'm proud to say legislators, including myself, worked very hard on this issue. There are very important lessons to be taken from it. Last year, Boeing's representatives and officials from the various labor unions came together in my office to talk about what we could do together to make this happen. One thing that kept coming up was Washington's **unemployment insurance system**. We worked long and hard to reach a compromise that **protects workers and control costs for employers**.

Another reform that ended up being a big factor in Boeing's decision was **bringing fairness to our workers' compensation system**. It resulted in **savings up to \$200 million** over the next two years by reducing the number of hearing-loss claims being improperly charged to employers.

Legislators also created a package of significant tax incentives for Boeing **if, and only if, the 7E7 work came to Washington**. This proved to be an effective strategy.

Saving our health care systems

Health care must be **affordable and accessible**. This is not the case in Washington. Instead, health care costs are skyrocketing and availability of coverage is being limited. **This has created a crisis — one we must address head-on now**.

The Legislature first must address liability reform. These reforms will **control the escalating cost of malpractice insurance**, which is driving doctors out of our state or causing them to close shop. We also need other **insurance reforms** to help control costs, thereby **enabling more employers** to provide health care coverage for their employees. Other health care areas of focus for the Legislature must be:

- Small-group insurance reform
- Long term care financing
- Healthcare workforce development
- Childhood fitness and nutrition



More must be done to protect current, attract new, employers

While we all should be proud of the Boeing announcement, legislators must not stop here. We have a lot of work to do, and it should continue in 2004. It's my hope the Legislature will approve more reforms this year that will quickly help **move Washington's struggling economy forward**.

We must continue to be **fiscally responsible** and **increase our competitiveness** for existing and new employers. This will help Washington employers compete more effectively and provide much needed jobs in our state.

Fiscal responsibility

For the 2004 supplemental budget, the Legislature should follow the same sound fiscal principles of the 2003 budget. We must ensure the state ends this biennium with a budget that is **sustainable** and **does not require tax increases or a reduction in core state services**. The Legislature must also **strengthen the state's spending limits** and create a **reliable, constitutional rainy day fund**.

Increasing competitiveness

Washington needs to **create a business climate that fosters a growing economy**. With signs that the U.S. economy is rebounding, it's important we position our state to participate in similar **economic expansion**. In order to increase our competitiveness, we must:

- Lift unnecessary regulatory burdens
- Renew and extend tax incentives for small businesses and high-tech research and development

Tort reform

Part of being a more employer-friendly state is having a court system that is **fair, equitable, and not an insurmountable burden to consumers and employers**. To ensure this, tort reform is needed. Other states have enacted tort reform laws with great success. A few practical solutions that would reduce the amount of frivolous lawsuits and **put the "justice" back in our justice system** are:

- Joint and several liability reform
- Tort judgment interest rate
- Cap on non-economic damages
- Binding arbitration of disputes
- Encouraging early dispute resolution to free up courts and reduce costs



K-12 education remains a focus

I care deeply about education, particularly K-12 issues, and **believe no child should be left behind**. The students in our K-12 education system represent the hopes and dreams of our future. A world-class primary and secondary education is the foundation for a vibrant economy and strong families.

As we consider new ideas for education, we must continue to be guided by the promise to **local communities** that they **have control and accountability of their schools**. I have this philosophy in mind whenever I make decisions on education issues.

Trust and accountability in state government

I sometimes hear cynicism for and distrust in politicians and legislative processes. While some criticism may be warranted, let me assure you the people who you've elected to represent you care deeply about you and the state.

There is no better example of this than in 2003 when we got the votes needed to authorize the state auditor to audit government operations. This common-sense approach **allows you – the taxpayer – "inside" information on how government operations are being handled**. Results will now be available, free, on the Internet. Prior to this, information was only available to elected officials.

I support this long overdue government accountability measure. I think it will go a long way in **restoring constituents' faith** in the people they choose to represent them.

Ravensdale Market update

Ravensdale Market has been an important community establishment for nearly a century. Owners are continuing to take steps in an attempt to prevent the closure of their historic landmark. The problem is that Ravensdale Market needs to be connected with the Covington Water District, which comes at a significant cost. Owners are seeking a federal grant that, if approved, will alleviate a portion of this cost.

Let's hope this important market continues to be a place local residents can meet and shop. A special thanks to those who have stood in solidarity behind the market and what it stands for in the community.